

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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November 3, 1982

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE I-144-82

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: New Service for the Visually Impaired - "Vision Volunteers"

REFERENCE:

The Office of Services to the Blind has initiated the Vision Volunteers Program, which is currently operating in San Joaquin County as a pilot project. The purpose of the Vision Volunteers Program is to mount a cooperative effort between public and private agencies designed to fill a void in the lives of the visually impaired, created in large part by the reduction in available public social services.

Currently, as operated in San Joaquin County, Vision Volunteers are recruited and screened by the CWD Volunteer Coordinator. After being trained by the local agency for the blind, they go into the homes of older blind persons to provide assistance including reading mail, paying bills, identifying food and drug items, etc. This is only one of a variety of models for the operation of the program. Volunteers could be helpful to older blind persons by providing a variety of tasks related to daily life management which would assist their clients to remain in their own homes even as they experience progressive sight loss.

The purpose of this letter is to urge you to adopt the Vision Volunteers Program as one of your priority efforts. The Vision Volunteer can replace some of the functions formerly provided and arranged for by social workers. The Vision Volunteers incorporate the qualities of a friend, helper, and resource person. The volunteers can be trained to have access to needed resources.

It is in the public interest to develop volunteer programs wherever appropriate. The elderly population, particularly the visually impaired elderly, is growing at a much faster rate than the general population. The public social services system will not be able to provide adequate supportive services to the aging visually impaired. The Vision Volunteers Program is designed to call upon the private and voluntary sectors which have a greater capacity to grow. The program can expand with the need.

Department of Social Services' staff are willing and able to assist you in putting this program together. Material for use by radio, TV, and newspapers has been developed and can be adopted elsewhere. It was very effective in Stockton. Please call Lynda Bardis, Chief, Office of Services to the Blind, at (916) 445-7280.



MARION J. WOODS  
Director

cc: CWDA